

Marriage and Parenting

Topic 9 – Parenting – Foundations and Goal

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Introduction

What do parents want for their children? Perhaps parents want their children to be nurtured in the womb, be born healthy, get into the best preschool, get invited to all the best birthday parties, be popular in school, get good grades, have fame in athletics, get college scholarships, get a good job, have financial security, find a spouse that ... (makes a lot of money, comes from a good family, gets along with you, etc.), buy a house with a white picket fence, have your grandchildren, etc.

❖ **What do Christian parents want for their children?**

To accomplish the goal of having their kids turn out well (or at least be controllable during their years at home) parents can employ many methods.

“Picture respectful, responsible, obedient children who entertain themselves without television or video games, do their own homework, and have impeccable manners. A pie-in-the-sky fantasy? Not so, says family psychologist and bestselling author John Rosemond. Any parent who so desires can grow children who fit that description—happy, emotionally-healthy children who honor their parents and their families with good behavior and do their best in school.”
<http://www.parentingbythebook.com/>

In addition, some parents may jump from one method to another as their children are not responding to a particular method. Parents can be desperate for their children to experience success and can therefore develop deep convictions regarding parenting formulas. Some examples of methods are:

- Education methods: public school, secular private school, Christian private school, charter school, public school homeschooling, Christian homeschooling, etc.
- “Christian” parenting methods: “Biblical Parenting University”, “Parenting by the Book”, “Nurturing God’s Way”, “Growing Kids God’s Way”, etc.
- Types of baby feeding methods: breast vs. bottle, schedule vs. demand, etc.
- Types of discipline methods: strict, lenient, child directed, parent directed, spanking, timeouts, only positive, etc.
- Church-based methods: Worship services, Sunday school, Children’s church, Youth groups, AWANA, VBS, Youth summer camps, discipleship groups, family integrated churches, etc.

❖ **How many of these methods do you employ hoping your children will turn out well?**

In some cases, these methodologies in-and-of themselves are not bad. However, in many cases, the methodologies are non-biblical or at least extra-Biblical. These ideas coupled with poor Biblical interpretation move parents to trust the methodology rather than God Himself. It can also move parents to be legalistic regarding the methodology. By employing methodologies, parents can be tempted to believe that by pushing the right buttons they can be successful at parenting. Yet, good parenting is not determined by methodologies.

❖ **Where do you place your trust for your parenting?**

The Biblical principles and precepts concerning child training are actually quite basic. We, as parents, are then called to work out these basic principles specifically in our own family situations. Today, we will look at some foundational principles of parenting and then the goal of parenting.

Foundational Principles

1. Successful parenting is NOT measured by the child's response, but by the faithfulness of the parents to God and His Word.

Many parents have children who are not where they want them to be: maybe the children have not bowed before Jesus as Lord and Savior; maybe they have not matured in their walk with Christ; maybe they are ambivalent to the things of God; maybe they have actively rebelled against God. The results of these situations could be manifested in many different ways.

Parents must understand that they cannot cause their children to become believers, grow in their walk with God, or have a hunger for God and His word.

⁵What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave *opportunity* to each one. ⁶**I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.** ⁷**So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.** 1 Cor 3:5-7

¹Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, ²**like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,** ³if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. 1 Pet 2:1-3

Successful parenting is NOT measured by the child's response, but by the faithfulness of the parents to God and His Word. Parents are called to be faithful stewards.

❖ **How do you measure success in parenting?**

Parents are stewards – they own nothing, including their children.

¹The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it. Psa 24:1

❖ **Do you view your children as a stewardship?**

Faithfulness is a result of consistently walking in the Spirit.

¹⁶But I say, **walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.** ... ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Gal 5:16, 22-23

❖ **Are you consistently walking in the Spirit?**

If you want to be a successful parent, be a man or woman who walks close with God; bow before Him alone and not other masters; study, do, then teach His word in your family.

⁹For on the first of the first month he began to go up from Babylon; and on the first of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, because the **good hand of his God was upon him.** ¹⁰For Ezra had **set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances** in Israel. Ezra 7:9-10

If you have not been faithful, then commit to repent. Repentance will be demonstrated by sorrow, earnestness, vindication, indignation, fear, longing, zeal, and avenging of wrong (2 Cor 7:9-11). Then come before the throne of grace to receive help in this time of need.

¹⁶Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Heb 4:16

❖ **Have you been faithful in your parenting?**

The next two points come from Psalm 127. It was written by Solomon and is a song of ascent, along with the grouping of Psalms 120-134, which pilgrims would sing on their way up to Jerusalem. There are several interpretations of the Psalm, but the context seems to focus it on the family.

2. God is sovereign. Therefore, include Him in your parenting.

¹Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the Lord guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain. ²It is vain for you to rise up early, To retire late, To eat the bread of painful labors; For He gives to His beloved *even in his sleep*. Psa 127:1-2

The first part of this Psalm seeks to focus our attention on God's work. Parenting apart from submission to God's sovereignty and ways is futile. God is to be at the center of all of His people's activities. We are to surrender ourselves to Him. Since God is sovereign, we do not want to be attempting to parent without surrendering ourselves to Him.

❖ **Do you include the Sovereign of all creation in your parenting?**

This is not a "let go and let God" mentality. "Labor" and "keeping watch" are only in vain if the Lord is not the center of the activity. Yet, laboring and keeping watch are still essential activities. And so, faithfulness to God's principles and precepts are important, but unless the Lord is the central focus we are missing the boat.

The type of work described in verse 2 is self-sufficient, anxious labor that is fearful of failure and absent from a reliance on the Lord's provision. Does that sound like your parenting?

The Lord is to be the center of the family. He is the builder, protector, and provider.

❖ **Who is the center of your family – God or your children?**

3. Children are a gift from God.

³Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward. Psa 127:3

A deep conviction that God is sovereign will lead parents to view their children as a gift from God. The Scriptures provide direct teaching that children are a gift as well as examples by parents who viewed children as a gift. Even from the first births, children were viewed as a gift.

¹Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "**I have gotten a manchild with the help of the Lord.**" Gen 4:1

²⁵Adam had relations with his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, for, *she said*, "**God has appointed me another offspring in place of Abel**, for Cain killed him." Gen 4:25

It is clear that children should be viewed as a gift, not a burden. However, many people view children as a hindrance to their lifestyle. Perhaps, they believe they could (or could have) accomplish so much more if they had not had children. A believing parent must view their children as a gift from God.

If you view your children as a gift from God, then you will be communicating that to them in word and deed.

❖ **Do you communicate to your children (in word and deed) that you view them as a gift?**

Solomon then continues by expounding on the blessing of children. Much has been written and preached on Psalm 127:4-5.

⁴Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth. ⁵How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; They will not be ashamed When they speak with their enemies in the gate. Psa 127:4-5

Words like arrows, warrior, blessing, and a full quiver allow many to support their cultural or extra-Biblical presuppositions. Yet, when this was penned under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, there was one thought in the mind of God. In being diligent to handle God's Word accurately, we should not add our presuppositions to the Biblical text.

Verses 4 and 5 simply continue the thought that children are a blessing from God and add that children are a source of protection and provision for their parents.

Old Testament / New Testament Differences

It is vitally important to understand the differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament promises concerning children. In the Old Testament, God promised to bless godly Israelites with children.

¹“Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. ²All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the LORD your God: ... ⁴“Blessed *shall be* the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground and the offspring of your beasts, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock. ... ¹¹The LORD will make you abound in prosperity, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your beast and in the produce of your ground, ... Deut 28:1-2, 4, 11

God did not make and has not made this promise to Christians. Couples who desire children and who are unable (or this far unable) to have children should never conclude that they are somehow missing out on God's blessing or they are somehow cursed or being punished by God. In addition, those who have been blessed with children should never, through attitude or words, make our brothers and sisters feel second-class because they do not have children. God in His sovereignty has a different plan for this couple – a plan for their good (Rom 8:28) and His glory (Psa 19:1; Eph 1:4-6, 11-12; Rom 9:23; Rev 4:11).

The Goal of Parenting

The purpose of all things and including the purpose of the believer's life is to glorify God. Therefore, the purpose of parenting is the same as every purpose in life – to glorify God

³¹Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, **do all to the glory of God.** 1 Cor 10:31

❖ **What is your moment-by-moment purpose?**

The believer's mission is to make disciples.

¹⁸And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and **make disciples of all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Matt 28:18-20

The mission or goal of parenting is the same – to make disciples of your children.

The greatest need of your child is regeneration – salvation from the penalty and power of sin.

²³**for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,** Rom 3:23

¹And you were **dead in your trespasses and sins**, ²in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. Eph 2:1-3

❖ **What do you view as your child's greatest need?**

This is your primary goal in parenting – to make disciples of our children – to proactively speak and live the gospel, to see your children identify themselves with Christ, and to teach them all that Christ commanded. This is the Christian parent’s responsibility, not a church leader nor Sunday school teacher nor youth leader. A Christian parent must not abdicate this responsibility.

How should a Christian parent bring the gospel to their children? These first three points are from Deuteronomy 6 (see also Deuteronomy 11:18-19).

1. A believing parent must strive to intake God’s Words – to impress them on your mind and heart.

⁶These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. Deut 6:6

The Scriptures are God’s very words (2 Tim 3:16). They are God’s love letter to His children. His Words are powerful.

¹²For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Heb 4:12

Who gets to see us taking in God’s Word? Yes, our children. What an example for them.

❖ Are you consistently taking in God’s Words?

2. A believing parent who is bowed before God, allowing the Words of Christ to richly dwell within them (Col 3:16), will strive to output God’s Word to their children.

⁷You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. Deut 6:7

- a. “You shall teach them diligently to your sons” (“children” in the ESV, NIV, KJV, NKJV)

“Teach them diligently” comes from a root word meaning to sharpen. Have you ever sharpened a knife, like on a sharpening stone? It takes concentration, repetition, and practice to bring the knife across the sharpening stone and hone it to razor sharp.

This speaks of constant, repetitive, **purposed events**. This is taking on the personal responsibility as a parent to teach your children God’s Word. Don’t assume someone else will teach your child about God. This is your responsibility as a parent.

Now, this also includes using all the resources at your disposal to bring the Word into your child’s life. Maybe that includes resources here at VBC like Sunday services and classes, age appropriate events, VBS, etc. Those are important, but really only a small part of the effort to bring the Word into your child’s life. This is your personal responsibility.

What might this look like?

- Reading the Scriptures with your child (every day) even when young.
- Praying with your child personally (before eating ok too); turning events into opportunities to bring life’s issues before the throne of grace.
- Watching age appropriate Bible story DVDs.
- Helping your children to begin their own Bible reading habit.
- Having your child read to you.
- Listening to audio books while in the car.

These are just ideas. It is your responsibility to apply God’s command to “teach them diligently” in your family. This is your responsibility as God gives you grace to accomplish! Do you have a plan?

- b. “Shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up”

This speaks of **opportune** events. And gives both the “where” and “when”.

- “when you sit in your house” – In your home
- “when you walk by the way” – Outside your home
- “when you lie down and when you rise up” – Eve and morn (and between)

We can think of this as speaking continually about the Lord and His Word. Making it a lifestyle. Parenting is a full-time responsibility. No phase of life is exempt. Biblical parenting is not compartmentalized parenting. In Biblical parenting, there is no such things as exchanging “quantity” time for “quality” time. ... Both are important.

What might this look like?

- First, you are going to have to actually talk to your children. Put down the device, video game, reading material, hobby, turn off the TV, etc.
- “I’m scared...” --> “God’s says ...”
- “I’m angry...” --> “God’s says ...”
- “I’m sad...” --> “God’s says ...”
- “I love you, but God loves you more than I do. ... so much that He...”
- On nature walks or sunsets... “Look at the amazing things God made ...”
- Ask questions... “What did you learn today at school, Sunday school, AWANA, youth group... ?” / “How is your relationship with so-and-so?”

If you are bowed before God and taking in His Word into your mind and heart, there will be observable differences in your life. You will **speak** God’s word to your children in both purposed and opportune ways.

❖ **How often do you speak with your children about the Lord and His Word?**

3. A believing parent who is bowed before God, allowing the Words of Christ to richly dwell within them (Col 3:16), will strive to display God’s Word to their children.

⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead.

⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. Deut 6:8-9

Believing parents are called to display God’s Words in how we live both in the home “*You shall write them on the doorposts of your house*” and in the community “*...and on your gates*”. A reverence for and obedience to God’s Word will be our garments.

It is interesting that personal, family, and community display are talked about equally. We are not a different person personally, and a different one with our family, and a different one with the community. The follower of Jesus should not compartmentalize his/her life. They should be the same in every area.

❖ **Are you walking consistently or are you different in different areas of your life?**

If you are bowed before God and taking in His Word into your mind and heart, you will **display** God’s word to your children.

4. Akin to number three is “Live in a manner worthy of the gospel”.

¹⁷Therefore **if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature**; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 2 Cor 5:17

¹Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to **walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called**, Eph 4:1

¹Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ. 1 Cor 11:1

❖ **Can you say to your children what Paul said to the Corinthians?**

5. Teach children the whole counsel of God. Do not only teach stories (accounts) about Old Testament heroes.

¹⁶**All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable** for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. 2 Tim 3:16-17

❖ **Do your children know more about Noah, Joseph, and Daniel than God’s attributes?**

6. Highlight the essential truths of the gospel

- Teach your children about their Creator. Teach them about all His attributes. Do not just focus on love, mercy, and grace, but also talk about holiness and righteousness.
 - God’s absolute, incommunicable, or divine attributes: Glory (Psa 24:10; 104:1-2; Isa 42:8; Ex 33:18-19); Beauty (Psa 27:4; 96:4-6); Greatness (Psa 95:3; Dan 9:4); Infinity (1 Kings 8:27; Psa 145:3; 147:5; Isa 55:8-9; Rom 11:33); Eternality (Psa 90:2; Isa 40:28; 1 Tim 1:17); Independence (Acts 17:24-25; Isa 40:13-14); Immutability (James 1:17; Mal 3:6); Omnipresence (Psa 139:7-12; Prov 15:3; Jer 23:23-24); Omniscience (Prov 5:21; Matt 11:21; Psa 139:1-6); Omnipotence (Job 42:1-2; Psa 115:3; Jer 32:17; Rev 19:6); and Sovereignty (2 Kings 19:25; Isa 14:24; Isa 46:9-11; Eph 1:11; Rom 8:28)
 - God’s relative, communicable, or personal attributes: Faithfulness (Psa 33:4; 119:89-90; Deut 7:9; 32:4; 2 Tim 2:13); Righteousness (Psa 11:7; 89:14; 116:5; Acts 17:31; Col 3:25); Truth (Isa 45:5; John 17:3; Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18); Holiness (1 John 1:5; Ex 15:11; Psa 99:5; Isa 6:3; 1 Pet 1:15); Wrath (Nah 1:2; Col 3:6; John 3:36); Jealous (Ex 20:4; Ex 34:14; Psa 78:58); Love (Jer 31:3; Eph 2:4-5; 1 John 4:8; John 3:16; Rom 5:8); Lovingkindness (Psa 51:1; 106:1; 145:9; Nah 1:7); Compassion (Neh 9:19; Lam 3:22; Psa 103:13); Grace (Joel 2:13; John 1:14; Eph 2:8; 1 Pet 5:10); and Longsuffering (Num 14:18; Rom 2:4; 2 Pet 3:14-15; 1 Tim 1:16)

❖ **Do you overemphasize or underemphasize any of God’s attributes?**

- Teach your children about sin; show them their own sin. Ensure that sin is viewed as a violation of God’s law and not a displeasure by you (their parents).
 - Teach them about their total depravity.
 - Teach them about the penalty for their sin.
 - Teach them about their inability to earn or deserve forgiveness of sin.
 - Teach them that they are helpless before God.

❖ **Do you care more about your children having a great view of themselves (or having self-esteem) than about having a proper, heart-level view of themselves before God?**

- Teach your children about Jesus.
 - Teach them that Jesus is the eternal God-man – Lord of all.
 - Teach them of the purpose of His coming.
 - Teach them of His eternality, virgin birth, sinless life, sacrifice for sin, resurrection, ascension, and imminent return.
- ❖ **Do you tell your children the entire account of Jesus?**
- Teach children about true saving faith.
 - Teach them that saving faith is not mere intellectual assent to facts concerning the gospel.
 - Teach them that saving faith is faith in the Lord of all.
 - Teach them that saving faith encompasses trust/belief, repentance, following Jesus, self-denial, forsaking all, and confessing Jesus as Lord.
- ❖ **Does your description of true saving faith consist of “asking Jesus into your heart”?**

Christian parents desire so very much to see their children come to faith. It gives us no greater joy.

⁴I have **no greater joy** than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth. 3 John 1:4

And so, we must be very careful and not use peer pressure or our approval to coerce or manipulate our children into “believing”.

❖ **Do you communicate to your children how happy you would be if they accepted Jesus?**

Concluding Thoughts

Children must be viewed as a blessing from God and parents as stewards of this amazing gift. God must be the center of parenting. For Christian parents, the goal of parenting is to focus everything on making disciples of our children.

Real Life Scenarios

Yoursel#1: You have been married a couple of years and you and your spouse are enjoying the freedom that DINK-dom affords. Other friends are having children, but you don’t see how having children could be anything but a way to restrict your freedom and a burden. What lies have you been accepting and how should you be thinking instead?

Yoursel#2: Your children love soccer: AYSO, all stars, club, etc – all year long. This is all you talk about and your entire family’s focus is soccer. After looking at our study today, what are some changes you might want to make to honor what God has called you to be as a parent?

Someone Else #1: A workmate has confided in you that he/she is fed up being a parent. It is so hard and he/she is getting no help from their spouse. In thinking about bringing biblical care to your hurting friend, what is the first thing you need to know? What is the next thing you might share with him/her?

Someone Else #2: A church friend spends most of their time at work and on hobbies and leaves the parenting to their spouse. This has caused friction in the marriage. In thinking about bringing biblical care to your hurting friend, what is the first thing you need to know? What is the next thing you might share with him/her?

Marriage and Parenting – Additional Study Topic 9 – Parenting – Foundations and Goal

Read Psalm 1.

Describe the person who has the law of the Lord as his/her delight.

Is God's Word your delight? What would need to change to demonstrate that God's Word is your delight?

Who are your closest confidants and influences? Are they people who focus you on God's Word or move you away from it?

Read Psalm 127 and 128.

Note every principle on parenting and marriage that you can find.

What is the most important thing in your life?

How do you view children?

What do you view as your responsibility regarding children?

Do you fear (reverential awe) God?

How is the family blessed who fears the Lord?